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ABSTRACT

In comprehensive planning, the community's goals and objectives are identified and developed; its assets and liabilities are studied and evaluated; and its resources are used to achieve its goals and objectives. Citizen participation in the planning process must be an enlightened participation. Some of the methods that may be used for citizen education are: newspaper, radio, television, planning publications, public meetings, planning exhibits and tours, and collaborative planning. Findings of a study made to determine the importance and state of citizen participation and education in Syracuse, N. Y. and vicinity are discussed from the viewpoints of mass media, public planners at state, county and city levels of government, and of a private planning consultant. The consensus of opinion is that citizens, at all levels of society, are important directly and indirectly in the planning process; that a vigorous educational program involving a variety of approaches is both feasible and essential in a successful planning program; and that the professional planner is central to the success of planning as an initiator and sustainer of activity designed to educate the legislator and citizen alike. A list of literature cited is given, and appendixes present a precis of the MIDNY project and a sample letter and questionnaire. (DB)

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CITIZEN EDUCATION AND THE PLANNING PROCESS

by
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An R.M. 201 paper for
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Environmental Influences,
S. U. N. Y. College of Forestry
at Syracuse University,
Fall Term, 1967-68.

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INTRODUCTION

While the land and water base of the United States will be the same in the year 2000 as it is today, the population of this country will have grown by 50 percent to reach the 300-million mark. Cities by that time could be sprawling, ant-hill developments, water could be dirtier, air could be "smoggier", and for most Americans the solitude of open spaces could be non-existent. On the other hand, the 300 million Americans could be living in less congestion than the 200 million live in today; the benefits of community life could be matched by the rich beauty of the countryside; urban centers could be free of smog and ample parklands within easy reach of all; and new industry could be located in rural America to provide the necessary base for a good life in the country. A constructive conservation and resource policy is the key to the building of this kind of America. (Freeman, 1967)

Such a policy is embodied in planning--comprehensive planning at the various municipal, regional and state levels. Citizens' enlightened judgment and wishes can result in planned communities with better housing, more appealing neighborhoods, better traffic circulation, and more efficient use of tax monies (State of New York Office of Planning Coordination). Because planning is so essential to the orderly development of this country, Section 701 of the Federal Housing Act of 1954 authorizes the Urban Planning Assistance Program. This program assists eligible municipalities by defraying up to 75 percent of the cost of preparing a comprehensive plan. A further incentive to the local governing body is that certain other types of federal and state aid are contingent upon the

preparation of an adequate planning document and the establishment of a local planning agency. (Field, 1967a)

Nevertheless, nearly 50 percent of municipalities preparing plans under "701" assistance fail to implement them. (Field, 1967b)

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING AND ITS IMPORTANCE

Planning is the application of careful thought and foresight to decision-making. All people plan--to meet expected events, to bring about things desired, or to prevent things not wanted. Individuals acting alone and in their own self-interest, probably do a pretty fair job of planning.

Some things, though, cannot be planned, built, or maintained at all by individuals acting independently. This is true of such things as highways, schools, parks, public utilities, and the control of air and water pollution, which can be provided only by people acting together through government.

In other cases, individuals acting only in their own interests can cause harm to other individuals. For example, one person who lets his house and property run down can cause his neighbors' property values to drop. Likewise, undesirable development of rural land can retard or prevent future desirable development.

Finally, it is sometimes cheaper--especially in the long run--to plan and develop some things as a community rather than to leave them for each individual to plan and develop his own. This is true, for example, of community parks and sewer and water systems.

Comprehensive planning, then, is basically a rational and ordered way of applying careful thought and foresight to these community--rather than individual--problems and opportunities.

In comprehensive planning, the community's goals and objectives are identified and developed, its assets and liabilities--its resources--are studied and evaluated, and its resources are effectively used to achieve its goals and objectives.

Some of the steps in this process are quite technical and generally require professional assistance (see following illustration). This is especially true of the population, economic, land use, transportation, soils, and other studies.

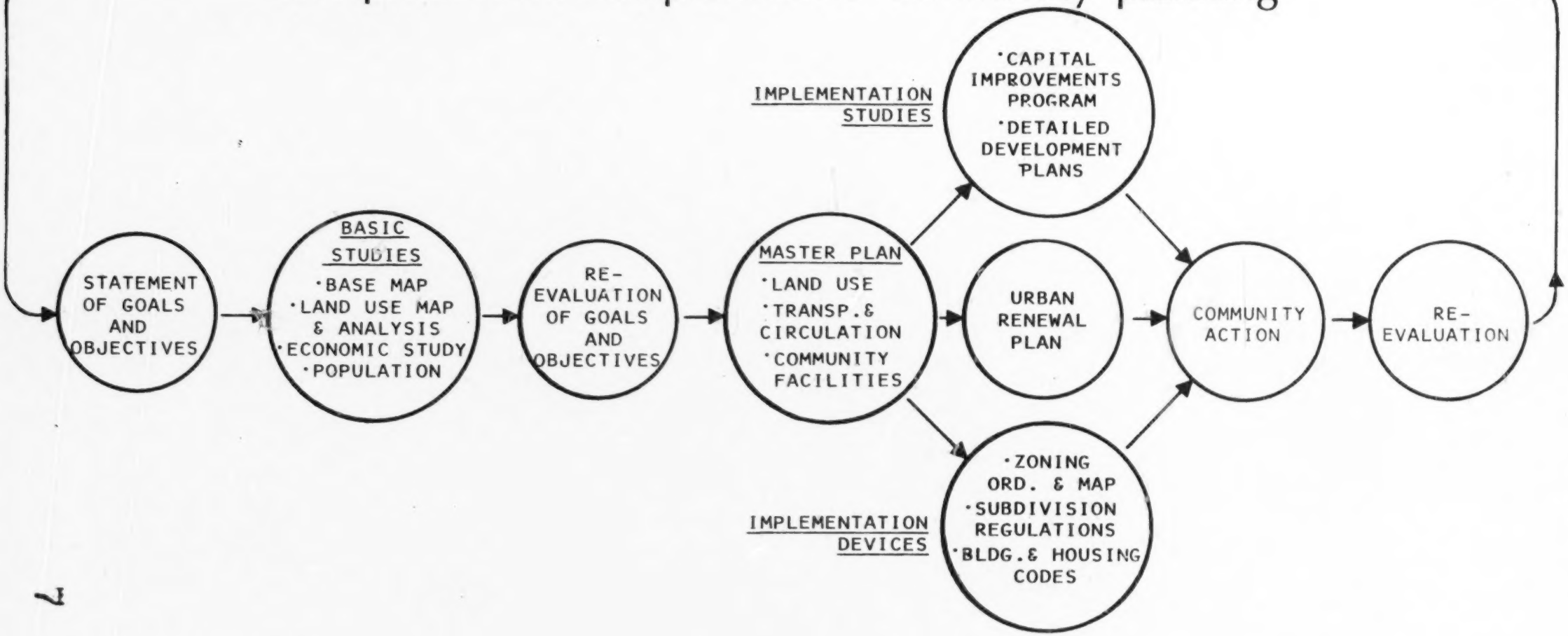
Other parts of the comprehensive planning process are less technical. They depend more on local knowledge and especially on local judgment, opinion, and values. These include the identification and development of goals and objectives, evaluating the plans suggested by the professionals, and making public decisions.

The plans can be carried out only by the community itself. Before anyone can expect the citizens of the community to follow suggested plans, the plans themselves must reflect the needs and desires of the people. The easiest way to bring this about is through citizen participation at each stage in the planning process.

These last few points about the need for the involvement of local people themselves in comprehensive planning are important. They point to the danger in the fairly common attitude that all of comprehensive planning is a highly technical process that had best be left to the professionals. This just isn't so. Planning, to be effective, must be planning by the community. (Hahn, 1966)

The practical importance of planning was cogently brought out by Maurice E. Cox, Supervisor of the Town of Lysander, County of Onondaga, New York, when

the process of comprehensive community planning



(State of New York Office of Planning Coordination, undated, page 6.)

he addressed state, regional, county, and city planners and planning officials; Cornell University Cooperative Extension agriculture, home economics, and 4-H agents of Cayuga, Cortland, Madison, Onondaga, and Oswego counties; the MIDNY* project team; and faculty members of the Cornell University state colleges of agriculture and home economics; at Baldwinsville, New York on December 7, 1966. Excerpts from his talk are cited below:

> Lysander is one of the larger towns in Onondaga County. Yet it has developed much slower than many of its neighbors, for several reasons.
>
> The first is because it is somewhat isolated by a natural barrier. Cross Lake on the west and the Seneca River on the south and east separate our area from the main body of the county. We are connected by three main bridges, located on state routes 48, 370, and 31. These three major highway arteries cross in the middle of the village of Baldwinsville. This makes us a thriving community but one so congested with vehicular traffic that it becomes a handicap in attracting industry, providing shopping places in the downtown area, and parking for public functions.
>
> Secondly, an adequate fresh water supply has been available only to the Village and a limited area to the east.
>
> A more serious problem was that of sanitation. The eastern section of the Town is covered with heavy red clay soil. Septic tanks do not work well.
>
> In the mid 1950's, when open space in the area immediately adjacent to Syracuse was fast disappearing, developers became interested in our town.
>
> These people, interested mainly in making a fast dollar, laid out tracts containing lots 50 by 100 ft. or at the most 75 by 150 ft. These lots, because of the low price, were attractive to many families and, in a short time, a community of small houses on small lots with inadequate septic systems developed into a problem area. Many, located along the river, were built as summer camps but soon became year-around residences.
>
> Our town board, anticipating a rapid growth of this type, faced the problem by appointing a zoning commission (1953). This group worked closely with the town board. Over a period of about three years it compiled a zoning ordinance, which was adopted October 3, 1956, and lasted for 10 years."

---

*MIDNY is a Congressionally-funded pilot program of public education on the need and value of effective, comprehensive planning in the five-county area centered by Syracuse in mid-New York State. See Appendix A for a fuller description of the MIDNY project.

Under present-day thinking, this was not the right way to approach the problem. Now, we think that planning should come first, and rightfully so.

However, if you analyze the work of that first citizen group, you find that they <u>were</u> actually planners. They were not professionals, nor were they highly skilled as are our present experts. I am proud of their accomplishment. It has worked well.

That ordinance provided minimum lot sizes of 1/2 acre for open areas and a minimum house floor area of 900 sq. ft.

Outside developers who started to buy land in our town accused us of "strong arm" tactics. That first ordinance was followed, the next spring, by subdivision regulations. (The developer is required to install storm drainage and roads and sewer and water lines if required by the State Health Department.)

We have large areas of open land. A fair proportion should be retained for agriculture and recreation. We believed that there is still plenty of land to provide many attractive homes in a suburban setting that is not overcrowded.

As a result of our approach, a great many people have been attracted to our town where the density of population remains at a low level. These people were our best supporters when the outside developers pressed for reduction in lot sizes. Some concessions were made by way of amendments to the zoning ordinance. Lots in tracts which have public sewers and public water were reduced in area but the minimum width of 100 ft. is still in force in most of the town. . . . If more lenient regulations had been adopted, our town could have been crowded with small homes on small lots. The result: . . . even greater congestion of our highways and most of all the loss of our friendly, uncrowded semi-rural living conditions.

With the advent of available and unlimited public water supply through the Lake Ontario water system a new era approaches. A 24 in. supply line has been built into the eastern section of one Town, and it will eventually connect to the Baldwinsville system.

For the first time it will be possible to accommodate a large industry. When it comes, a desirable residential area awaits its workers.

[Planning can be of value in many practical ways. The Town of Lysander's example is but one. Others might concern the location of gas stations and industry where they could downgrade the value of residential areas, or why parts of a city are ugly, or why some newly subdivided areas suffer from inadequate drainage and utilities, or what's really happening to downtown, or . . . . The list is long if not endless. (Pickett, 1967)]

THE PLANNING MACHINERY

In order to understand the process of planning in proper perspective, we must take a look at who undertakes planning and the relationship of the planning agency to executive government.

The planning function can be performed by existing municipal departments or centralized in a local planning board (State of New York Office of Planning Coordination, 1967). In New York, planning boards are the rule at the various levels of local government--village, town, city and county. Because the planning in one county affects, and is affected by, activity--planned or unplanned--in another, multi-county or regional planning is being instituted in several parts of the State.* An example of a regional planning agency is the Central New York Regional Planning and Development Board which covers Cayuga, Cortland, Madison, Onondaga and Oswego Counties. Overall "control" of planning in the State is the responsibility of the Office of Planning Coordination (O.P.C.), 488 Broadway, Albany. Three area offices of the O.P.C. (in addition to the Albany office) have been, or are in the process of being, set up in New York City, Syracuse and Albany. (Hahn, 1967)

While regional and county planners may provide guidelines and coordination, it is the town, city or village government that must ultimately accept and implement any given plan.

To illustrate the form in which power is given to local government to carry out appropriate zoning and taxation through enabling legislation at the State level,

---

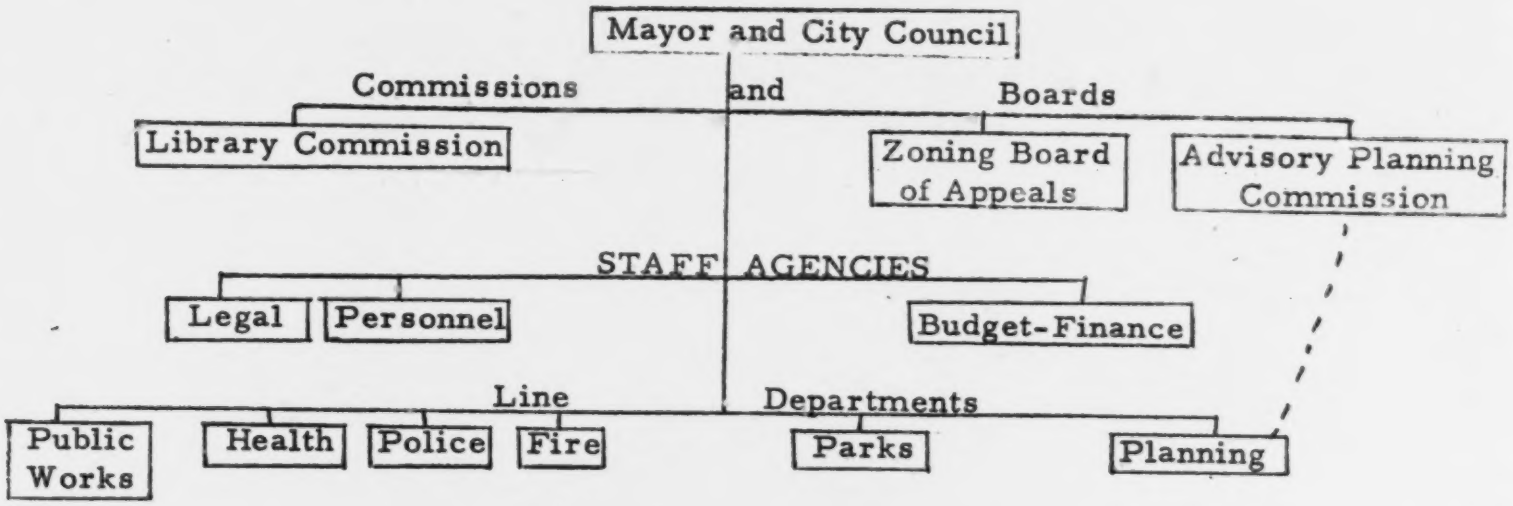
*State refers, throughout this paper, to New York State.

Section 261, Article 16, Chapter 62 (Town Law) of the Consolidated Laws of New York is quoted below:

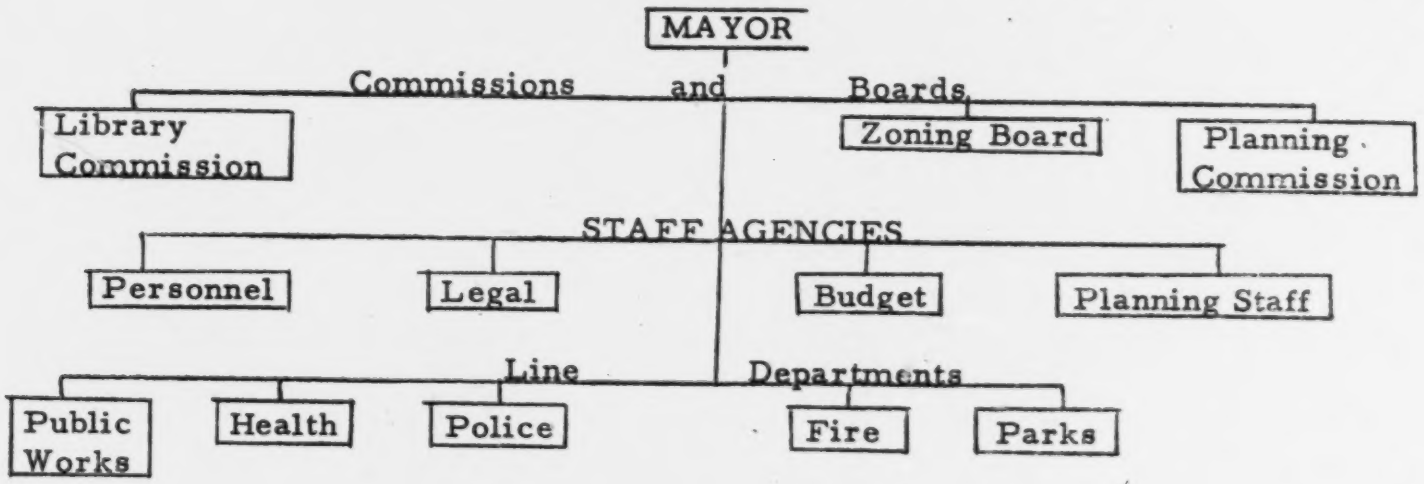
> For the purpose of promoting the health, safety, morals, or the general welfare of the community, the town board is hereby empowered by ordinance to regulate and restrict the height, number of stories and size of buildings and other structures, the percentage of lot that may be occupied, the size of yards, courts, and other open spaces, the density of population, and the location and use of buildings, structures and land for trade, industry, residence or other purpose; provided that such regulations shall apply to and affect only such part of a town as is outside the limits of any incorporated village or city; provided further, that all charges and expenses incurred under this article for zoning and planning shall be a charge upon the taxable property of that part of the town outside of any incorporated village or city. The town board is hereby authorized and empowered to make such appropriation as it may see fit for such charges and expenses, provided however, that such appropriation shall be the estimated charges and expenses less fees, if any, collected, and provided, that the amount so appropriated shall be assessed, levied and collected from the property outside of any incorporated village or city. Such regulations may provide that a board of appeals may determine and vary their application in harmony with their general purpose and intent, and in accordance with general or specific rules therein contained.

The chart that follows shows three models of municipal government in which the relationship of the planning agency (professional planners plus advisory commission or board) to the government executive varies. In (1), the planners take direct orders from the executive and carry out his bidding without too much question. The advisory board or commission is loosely linked with the planners. In (2), the planners advise the executive and have no direct link with the advisory board. Here there is a little more opportunity for the planners to influence activity if they have the confidence of the top executive. In (3), the commission, which is largely autonomous, controls the planners. This provides the greatest strength and freedom to planning, but the top executive still has the final say. Although he is more likely to be amenable to the suggestion of the commission which he appointed in the first place.

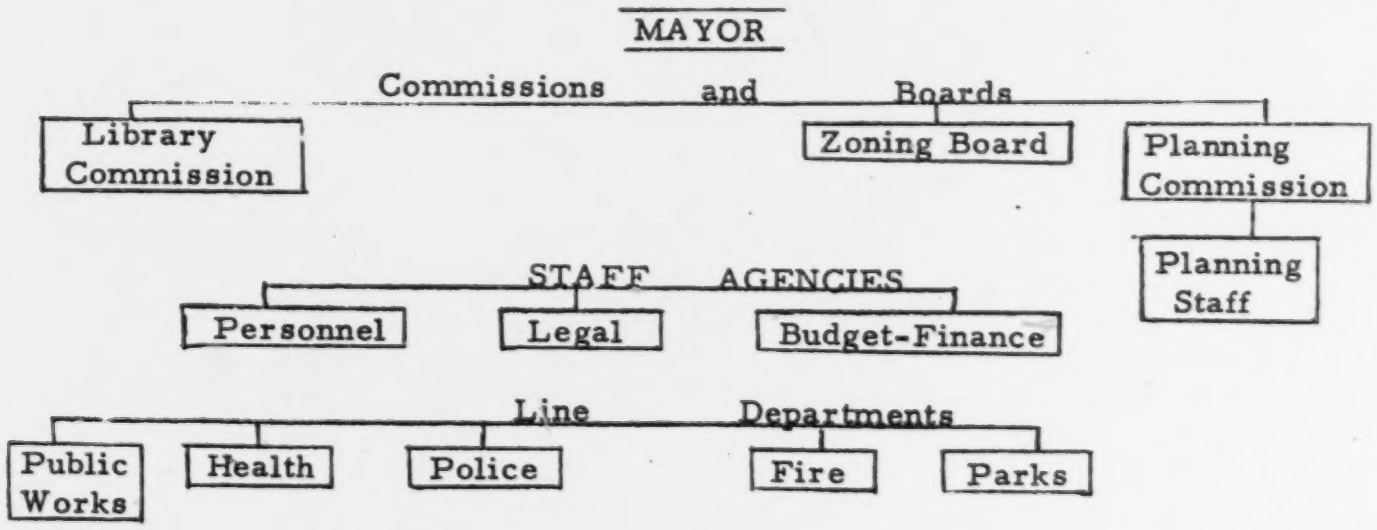
ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF LOCAL PLANNING AGENCIES



(1) Planning as a Line Department



(2) Planning as a Staff Agency



(3) Planning Under Independent Commission

(After Williams, I. E. 102 Class material, SUNY College of Forestry, Fall Term, 1967/68.)

MAKING DECISIONS IN A COMMUNITY

How a community goes about making decisions on planning or any other issue is of some relevance in this report. A meaningful insight into the process is given in Decisions in Syracuse - a Metropolitan Action Study (Martin et al., 1965).

It is indicated therein that public officials, political party functionaries, non-governmental groups, and the press (including TV and radio), as well as the electorate seek such goals as public office, money, service, power, prestige and social recognition through their control of public action. Resources of influence used to gain the ends in mind include: money and credit, control over jobs, control over the information of others, social standing, knowledge and experience, legality, ethnic solidarity, and the right to vote.

It is further suggested, on the basis of the Syracuse example, that community power is a network of action requiring initiators, experts, publicists, influentials, brokers, transmitters of power, and the final authority of government.

When something happens to the detriment of a vocal group, demand for action can be expected. Often groups such as the League of Women Voters initiate action. While many problems calling for remedial measures can be identified, only a limited number can be considered.

Once an idea is proposed, experts are needed to make a detailed proposal for action. An expertly prepared idea, though, is still not enough. Newspapers often compel consideration of an issue through informing the public of it by means of reports, feature stories and editorials. Indeed, newspaper publicity is likely to prove indispensable to the success of lesser causes. Likewise, television plays an increasingly important role in these respects.

The nominal target of publicity is the general public, but the real target consists of key public officials and those holding the power of decision. (On the occasion of a referendum, the real target could be the general public.) Support among the major economic and professional groups may win acceptance for a proposal without much attention to the formal governmental process.

Lawyers are brokers of power, in representing major concerns, and also wield much power in their own right. The skilled broker avoids extreme terms through negotiation and compromise in private. Those less well financed and unable to hire lawyers tend to make public the decisions they seek.

The representative of an economic group goes to the political party leader instead of trying to win over legislators one by one. It is frequently a case of one lawyer (the transmitter of power) talking to another--or even to himself. Much time and effort are saved.

Final step in the decision-making process is the act of government itself. This act is often minimized and regarded as a negative one as far as the making of decisions is concerned. However, negative power may be just as effective in its way as positive power.

Thus, interaction among several role players is central to community decision-making: the "powerful" community leader needs idea men to suggest possibilities to him, experts to package his program, publicists to put wheels under it, brokers to facilitate its consideration, and transmitters to bring it to the nominal decision-makers before he can do much with his power.

Environmental factors, such as population, resources, taxable property, on-going commitments, etc., may limit the freedom of choice of a community despite the inherent merits of any particular issue.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Better housing, more appealing neighborhoods, better traffic circulation, and more efficient use of tax monies--all of profound concern to the citizen--are among the results of community planning. Moreover, the democratic system of government is supposed to be one in which the will of the people is the source of public power, the political order subordinate to the rights of man, and the free participation of the citizen in collective decisions assured. Yet, Reginald Isaacs (1959) said he knew of no city that had a full program of conveying information to the public in a useful way. It seems "Planning with People" has been largely a pious hope to which many planners have paid lip service, and about which few have done anything. Isaacs went on to indict planners for being impatient and feeling no great need for the help of untrained citizens in making decisions.

Aaron Levine (1965) made similar observations several years later. Public agencies, he felt, had an obligation to inform of planning the citizen, whose living and working environment was involved, and in whose name a major capital investment was being made. He added, too, that the planner alone couldn't make the best plan--the ideas and dreams of citizens had to be incorporated in the technical plans to make them a meaningful part of the community fabric. He further thought it was politically naive to expect public officials to take unpopular action in the absence of electorate support to buttress the voting record.

There are these important roles the citizen can play (Pickett, 1967):

(1) He may provide constructive criticism through conversation, group meetings of all kinds, and letters to the local newspaper editors.

(2) He may encourage or oppose certain plans through membership in a labor union, Chamber of Commerce, P.T.A., church group, or citizens' planning association.

(3) He may take more direct responsibility as a member of an official advisory planning board.

It should not be overlooked, Pickett adds, that citizen organization needs strong leadership. It is almost always possible to identify key leaders who gave direction and drive to successful organizations.

Willingness of Citizen to Collaborate

"Planning with people" assumes a willingness by the people involved to collaborate in the search for the common good. Wilson (1963) asserts that such willingness may be totally absent when those members of the public involved stand to have their homes and neighborhoods destroyed in, for example, some urban renewal project. He does not agree with certain of the advocates of citizen participation who claim that conflict is the result of fear growing out of misunderstanding or ignorance. If such were the case, the problem could be solved with the mere dissemination of information. He points out, however, that the crux of the matter is an incompatibility of interests which may serve to heighten the conflict (rather than vice versa) if the facts of the case are spread abroad. He indicates, in addition, that urban renewal and citizen participation take place in a political context, the exigencies of which demand devotion to one or other, or both, of these goals without due consideration of the ultimate costs and benefits.

Time and Effort Justified

Too often, it seems, citizen understanding of planning and its implications--such as urban renewal--is not achieved. Planners often feel that the decisions to be made are too complex for the layman, or that citizen involvement requires more

time and effort than it is worth. Yet, where citizens have contributed to the planning process, analysis shows that the budget and staff requirements to gain citizen understanding are more than justified by the results (Levine, 1963).

Public participation in planning is not a matter of selling the plan. The critical factor in planning is the set of objectives which the community has for itself. The planner cannot set these objectives, but he can create an understanding of the potential that exists, help arouse public interest in the various alternative possibilities. He can point out that it was not fate that willed the present conditions, but that they result from historical factors which were largely determined by real people making, or failing to make, real civic decisions (Fiser, 1962).

Citizen participation per se is not enough. It must be enlightened. The wrong kind of participation is violent reaction to sudden or apparently sudden events. There must be public commitment by the planning agency and local administration to citizen education. "Citizen" here should, moreover, include not just the neighborhood resident and small shopkeeper, but also the president of the largest bank in town as well as the chubby, little first-grader. It should be noted, too, that the process of citizen understanding takes time. Ample time must be allowed (Levine, 1963).

Methods Available

Some of the methods that may be used for citizen education (as gleaned from various sources) are given below:

Newspaper, Radio, TV

Where planning programs have been successful, there has been considerable

press support. A continuous flow of information and news is needed to establish rapport with the press and other media (Levine, 1965). The mass media should not just be thought of when the planner has a statement to release. Rather should he (the planner) offer assistance to the staff of the local press, radio or TV in order that they might have a better insight into the planning process. "Letters to the editor" column is an effective device that is much overlooked. This part of a newspaper (and radio and TV often now have their counterparts) is frequently read by people who would miss an appropriate news item or editorial (Levine, 1963).

Planning Publications

An important method of communicating with citizens is through the continuing publication program of the planning agency. Publications should be imaginatively conceived, graphically executed, and easily readable with interest to the broad community. Suitable pamphlets and brochures also serve as useful handouts at meetings to help keep the facts straight in subsequent discussion (Levine, 1963 and 1965).

Public Meetings

Meetings are a useful way of informing the citizenry, especially if top officials such as the mayor, planning director and appropriate department chiefs of local government are present to hear views expressed and to field questions. Such meetings must give members of the public an opportunity to air their views (Levine, 1963).

A special kind of meeting is the public hearing at which reaction to a proposal is obtained.

Before a proposal is presented for public reaction, it should be logical and expressed in clear language. There is a difference between passive public consent and active public opinion. One of the measurements which can be taken at a hearing is the degree to which a proposal falls outside the range of passive consent and into the area of conflicting opinion. The planner's job is to enlarge the role of logic in public affairs, even though there is an increasing tendency toward nonlogic in the formation of public opinion. The hearing is a seminar, not a kindergarten. Hence the public should be given every opportunity to come prepared. Opponents will come without special prompting. Proponents may need to be stimulated. The planner may have to take an active part in the stimulation.

In addition to determining the extent to which a proposal is controversial, the hearing is a preliminary step toward diminishing the extent of the controversy. (Ask for specific suggestions as to how improvement might best be accomplished.) Although the area of conflict may be somewhat reduced during the hearing, the major opportunity comes after the hearing. Here, use of the written response to each suggestion for change is highly recommended. In these responses, to the maximum extent possible without adverse effects on the public interest, the suggestions or compromises in the direction of the suggestions should be accepted.

The device of the written response disciplines the planner, educates the planning commission and provides the governing body with a file indicating what questions have been raised and answered (Bair, 1963).

Planning Exhibits, Tours, etc.

The planning exhibit is a useful technique in community education. This may be very elaborate and expensive--as in the case of Philadelphia's quarter-of-a-million-dollar panorama--or relatively simple. Once the display is prepared, it may be used in a variety of situations. Indeed, it should be designed so as to facilitate its being moved, either in whole or in part, to a variety of locations. Once an investment has been made in the exhibit, there is a built-in obligation to keep it up to date (Levine, 1963). The planner and the politician ought to make clear to the public what the choices are in any given planning proposal. Visual aids would include--sketches, airviews, photomontages, and scale models. Any accessible project areas should also be involved in guide-yourself wlaking tours by means of suitable signs and markers (Clay, 1960).

Collaborative Planning

Probably the ultimate in citizen participation is the concept of collaborative planning. One metropolis in which this idea is practiced is the City of Toronto, Canada.

Before proposals become part of the official City of Toronto Plan, every household and business establishment in the 25 planning districts receive summaries of these proposals. They are then discussed at small group meetings in each sub-area of each district, amended and reviewed along with the scrupulous recording of citizen suggestions. Citizens take part in planning for districts at the same time as planners, politicians and public officials are being made aware of district needs and desires.

Critical elements:

--recognition and involvement of subcommunities

--client is public rather than special interests or power structure

--plan with people; not for them

--staff ideas are proposals for citizen discussion rather than master plans to be sold to the public

--concern for genuine interchange between people and planners far beyond the hollow formalities of the typical "public hearing."

Collaborative planning assumes the client is unsure of his specific desires, but would be interested in defining them with the help of a knowledgeable counselor. This contrasts with persuasive or hard-sell methods, or the poll-taking approach. Toronto's approach provides for routine consultation with the citizen.

Involving the public may cause more complications, but to improve opportunities for human activities and development (not for the efficiency of plan making), collaboration is necessary (Godschalk, 1967).

(Note: A step-by-step description of how the citizens in a small city organized themselves to support urban renewal is given in the report of a demonstration project carried out in Dyersburg, Tennessee (Nixon and Boyd, 1957). This report can almost suffice as a manual, since it contains samples of news releases, handbills, and other printed materials used over the first year, as well as a chronology of events leading up to certification of the urban renewal program.)

COMMENTS ON THE CENTRAL NEW YORK SITUATION

Mass media, public planners at State, county, and city levels of government, and a private planning consultant were contacted during December, 1967, to determine the importance and state of citizen participation and education in Syracuse and vicinity.

Newspaper

On the basis of random numbers and the availability of local daily newspapers at the Syracuse University Main Library, copies of the Herald-Journal and Post-Standard for the week of November 19, 1967, were scanned for planning stories (information). Out of 2,544 columns scrutinized, only seven-tenths of one column was devoted to planning-related items ("Letters to the Editor" regarding a traffic hazard and hospital location).

Assistant city editor, Syracuse Herald-Journal, stated his paper would use a variety of planning stories if they were prepared. (Reporters usually lack the necessary background to cover planning events adequately.) No conferences had ever been held, as far as he could recall, to educate press people about planning and its importance. Local planners, he indicated, need a P.R. (public relations) man.

TV and Radio

Reaction, indicative of the attitude of TV and radio personnel, was obtained from Miss Jean Daugherty, Program Director, WHEN-TV, in a personal interview conducted in her office on December 14, 1967.

Planners, she said, have the primary responsibility for initiating appropriate TV and radio programs. Media would be willing to provide free spot announcements on a regular basis (up to four or five per day at important times) to promote interest in planning and related events. There is a fine opportunity, she indicated, for planners to reach the public by means of such already-established programs as WHEN's "Morning Calendar."

People, she said, are always interested in what's going on around them: Why is a hole being dug in such-and-such a street? Why are there no cars on certain downtown sections of Route 81 when it looks finished?

Public interest cannot be aroused and sustained unless something pertinent is aired at least once every two months; preferably more often. Regular progress reports--tied into everyday living--could well be broadcast by planners under a title such as, "The Changing Face of Syracuse."

State-Level Planner

James Merritt, Planner, New York State Office of Planning Coordination, Syracuse (December 14, 1967):

Planning started in the 1930's because federal money was available. There was no sincere commitment to planning per se. This is still the case. The political community is not committed to planning and, as a result, planners--partly of their own volition and partly because they do not engender the confidence of the municipal executive--are shut off from the mainstream of events.

Thus, planners have the public image of being unimportant. In other words, a citizen doesn't feel a planner is the right person to whom he should go even with

a problem pertinent to the realm of planning. Because planners are not in the public view or in the political arena, they tend to feel less strongly about the practicality of their schemes.

The planner's rapport with press and TV in Syracuse is extremely weak. Because of his place in the hierarchy of local government, the planner seldom makes news. He can only propose; others dispose!

The confusion in planning is enhanced because there is no approved comprehensive master plan for Onondaga County. When zoning issues occur, even the planners are divided because there is no consensus on the guidelines to be followed. Crisis planning is the order of the day.

Because the local legislators are not committed to the principle of planning, there is strong reluctance to accept the increased financial burden caused by recommendations from regional planning agencies.

Citizen participation is vital--individually and collectively. Apart from membership in civic groups, the citizen needs to have his interest kept alive by means of meetings at the grass-roots level. The governor's town meetings may well be the vanguard of similar functions at which public opinion on community affairs could be aired.

Weekly forums between community leaders and agencies engaged in some form of development would justify TV, radio and press coverage. Planning organizations at different levels could also come together three of four times a year to share ideas.

Cooperative Extension's MIDNY project is providing a useful service in bringing together the planners and other professional groups in the five-county central New York region. Tours have also been an important part of the program.

County-Level Planners

Robert Becker, Onondaga County Planner, Syracuse (December 14, 1967):

Lack of participation in planning may well be attributed to more people renting rather than owning homes today. More and more apartments are being built, and more are expected to be built. Banks have more interest in housing than home-owning citizens because of the lower down payments needed at present.

People tend to learn to live with bad things rather than protest. This gives rise to general apathy. Groups, such as the League of Women Voters, service clubs, P.T.A., etc., are effective to some extent in expressing public opinion.

While TV is probably the best means of communication, it emphasizes entertainment too much. There is a need for more thought-provoking programs. Planning does not get a "fair shake" from the newspapers.

Syracuse is singularly poor in citizen-local government interaction. Public hearings attract little interest.

Planning is essentially technical rather than social or political.

* * *

Judson Allen, Cayuga County Planner, on visit to Syracuse (December 18, 1967):

Planning success may be attributed to a vigorous P.R. program. It is essential to develop a program that makes sense to people and to make sure they know about it. Technical aspects of a program may have to be sacrificed to accommodate adequate public relations.

In Cayuga County, articles are written for newspaper reporters, and four public workshops (reaching 450 to 500 persons) are conducted each month by planners. Multi-colored graphic materials are used to convey information to audiences.

The citizen needs to have an appreciation for what his county can be like, and toward this end Cayuga County maintains a busy speakers' bureau. It is important in such a program, too, to identify and involve opinion leaders in the various communities.

(During the interview, Mr. Allen referred to a paper, "The Importance of Citizen Participation in the Planning Process," given by him at a Cornell-sponsored conference in Delaware County, New York, earlier in the year. Appropriate parts of it are paraphrased below.)

Community planning, like any other public function, is to serve the people. No matter how fine a job the technical planner does, unless some tangible results emanate from his recommendations, his mission has failed. The ultimate objective of the planner is to have some effect upon the environmental, social, physical, and economic unit which he serves.

Planners in a democratic society must have their proposals reviewed by a number of public, semi-public, dependent and independent groups who may or may not support them.

Planners are not infallible. They should also recognize that the need for, and methods of, comprehensive planning are often not generally understood by planning boards, by the laity of the community, or even by the professions whose talents are needed in the planning process.

There is need for two kinds of citizen involvement--(1) those with leadership responsibilities, and (2) the general public. A basic goal of all participation is education in the planning process of the community decision-makers, so that they can determine, in their own way, whether it is something they want or not. If the program is successful, a climate for planning is established.

At this point, many programs of citizen involvement falter. Sustained, informed, support necessary for planning comes only from those who have actually participated in the planning operation. It is easier for a planner to do the work himself than it is to involve lay citizens, but, public support is needed to obtain results. Support is not easily gained after decisions have been made.

The Cayuga County planning board is so deeply committed to the principle of citizen participation that it has assigned greater priorities to a well-designed program of involvement than to technical responsibilities.

Believing in committees, the Cayuga County board has the following:

1. Central business district committee
2. Land use committee
3. Natural resources committee
4. Population and economic committee
5. Transportation committee
6. Historical committee

These committees are composed of leading people in the community who have an interest in, or who are technically qualified in, the given subject.

In addition to these basic committees, the board services four sector councils. The councils have been formed around the major land use regions of the county. This involves about 300 people. While the committees are intended to advise the Cayuga County planning board regarding policy, the sector councils are intended to develop a grass-roots level of planning understanding in the locality. The committees, working from the top down, and the sector councils, working from the bottom up, have the planning staff sandwiched in between. Their functions, however, are critical: evaluating master plan proposals from the policy-making levels and creating interest and participation at the local level. This helps to avoid conflict with local planning efforts, and to develop an appreciation of planning objectives and recommendations at the point where much of the effectuation will take place.

New York State law clearly places effectuation of planning proposals at the local legislative level. The board contends that if the proposals resulting from the planning program are to be effectuated they must have the support of the local legislators as well as the support of the decision-making structure at the county level.

In today's society, even the most uneducated and deprived person is supprisingly aware of his community. The inhabitants of any area have valuable views and opinions to express on the subject of their lives, their environment, and their community. There is no better place to channel this interest than into involvement in a planning program.

City-Level Planner

Richard Orman, Planner, City of Syracuse Planning Office (December 13, 1967):

People are generally not willing to listen when the overall community plan conflicts with their personal interests. In the poorer neighborhoods, the Office of Economic Opportunity organizes the people to work for change.

In the public hearing, people express opinions through their elected representative who may not be too well informed of their interests. The elected representatives need to be better educated in the planning process.

Educational efforts locally have met with only limited success. In one case of a proposed zone change, movies, direct mail to the homes involved, and four public meetings were used to no avail. Despite the fact that reporters call once or twice a week at the office, few stories result because of the conceptual nature of planning which is not well understood by the local newspapermen.

Three years ago, 10,000 newsletters were mailed monthly to key people in the community. Lack of funds plus apparent ineffectiveness caused discontinuance of the practice.

In 1967, an exhibit was set up at the State Fair to explain community planning. Only persons living in the specific areas involved seemed to be interested.

One plan for citizen education in mind is to make a professional planner responsible for advising individuals and groups in each of the city's planning districts. The planner, so assigned, would become well acquainted with local problems, and would be available to interpret information pertinent to any given planning issue.

Cooperative Extension's MIDNY project was given an accolade, especially with regard to the favorable impact it is making in rural areas.

The Private Consultant

James Clapp, Planner, Planners Collaborative, Inc., Syracuse (December 13, 1967):

Because of vested, personal interests, public participation may not be too helpful to the planner. There is a difference in perspective: the planner tries to do what is best for the community as a whole, the citizen looks at issues as they affect him and his family. A new road, for example, may be of general benefit, but bring increased noise and other inconvenience to those living close to the right-of-way.

Planning, to be acceptable, has to be technically sound and sympathetic to short-run human needs. Rapport with the citizen can probably be achieved by meeting immediate, strongly felt needs. Then, when something of a more abstract nature comes along, the planner's guidance will receive more credence and support.

Some mechanism is needed that will permit and encourage dialogue between the citizen and the planner. Here, the planner must take the iniative. The planner needs to perform a better public relations function, although this might be frowned upon in certain political situations.

Citizens play a useful role in "staffing" planning boards, but, through lack of education or interest, they tend to want to be spoon-fed by the planner.

Planners Collaborative does planning work for municipalities which do not have their own professional planning staff. In a recent assignment, involving Endicott, Johnson City and the Town of Union in Broome County, New York, a letter and questionnaire were used to elicit some opinions from key people in the communities concerned. Because these documents embody some important thinking and procedures pertinent to the participation of leading citizens in the planning process, they are included as Appendix B to this report.

SOME CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Planning is of national as well as local concern. While the land and water base of the United States will be the same in the year 2000 as it is today, the population is expected to increase by 50 percent to reach the 300-million level. If the resources for living are not to be impaired, planned development--incorporating a constructive conservation and resource policy--is a *sine qua non*.

Despite the fact that suitable legislation and financial assistance are available at various levels of government to facilitate planning, things are not going smoothly. There is lack of real community involvement; plans are prepared but not implemented; or, in overlapping jurisdictions, one plan is in conflict with another.

This paper emphasizes the planner-citizen relationship. The planner sits between the mass of people in the community whom his plan is supposed to serve, and the government, representing the interests of these people, which is responsible for implementing it. The planner must, thus, establish rapport with the citizens as individuals in the community as well as with the legislators, elected by the citizens to handle their civic affairs and guide their destiny as a community. The planner may serve a line or staff function in government, or he may be responsible to a virtually autonomous, appointed commission.

A prerequisite of confidence in planning is enough education about its process and its beneficial results by both citizens and legislators. A community plan can only be adequate and acceptable insofar as it embodies the desires and aspirations for the community of those who live, work, buy, sell, and manufacture

in it. Obtaining expressions of these desires and aspirations is part of the function of so-called citizen participation. The law provides for public reaction to planning proposals by means of hearings. Usually, though, hearings attract the vehemently opposed segment of the public. Those who have no strong feelings against what is being proposed do not normally attend.

The much-desired education of the citizen prior to such hearings is generally insignificant to non-existent. Moreover, hearings are usually too late in the scheme of things to incorporate significant amendments or modify goals.

A continuing program of education by means of press, radio, TV, public meetings, exhibits, tours and special planning publications is, in the opinion of many planners, essential to the successful conception, development and implementation of a plan. Yet, in the Syracuse area, little use is being made of these educational vehicles.

The individual wields little power by himself, but as a member of some organized, vocal group he can make his presence felt where it counts--at the legislative level.

Basically, this study documents the fact that lack of success in planning may be blamed on the legislators, the planners, and the citizens--all three. Since, however, the professional planners are committed to planning as a central purpose in life, it is to them the greatest share of responsibility for remedial action must fall. They must seek to initiate public relations programs either directly or through the appropriate office of executive government. Rather than

regarding themselves as secluded technicians, they should try to expose themselves to public inquiry. Also, by addressing themselves to some of the immediate, day-to-day problems of citizens and legislators they could establish rapport and engender a belief in their usefulness that would further their ends in terms of longer-range plans.

Consensus, then, seems to support the contention--that citizens, at all levels of society, are important directly and indirectly in the planning process; that a vigorous educational program involving a variety of approaches is both feasible and essential in a successful planning program; and that the professional planner is central to the success of planning as an initiator and sustainer of activity designed to educate legislator and citizen alike.

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APPENDIX A

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION MIDNY PROJECT

MIDNY — for Mid-New York — is a research-based, action-oriented, informal adult education effort established to assist local leadership in the comprehensive planning and development of an urbanizing region. Its objective is to design and carry out educational programs tnat will clarify relevant and timely issues as a basis for raising the quality of public decision-making.

The Region

The five counties of Mid-New York — Cayuga, Cortland, Madison, Onondaga, and Oswego — are growing rapidly. With a population of 680,000 in 1960, the region is expected to grow to 1,140,000 by 1990. Most of this growth is urban growth, of course. With it can come increased wealth, goods and services, and opportunities for choice and intellectual stimulation. But these advantages may be partially offset by the problems of congestion, sprawl, of providing necessary services, and of large-scale and rapid development. The difficulties of managing imminent changes are compounded because most of the growth will be taking place on the periphery of urban areas, in jurisdictions that are presently rural and not well-equipped to meet them. In contrast to the burgeoning populations of such towns, others are more isolated from Syracuse and other growth centers and will continue to have the problems of stagnation and decline and the opportunities associated with open space, outdoor recreation, and country living.

Comprehensive Planning

Comprehensive community planning — in all parts of the region, at all appropriate levels, considering all relevant issues, and reflecting the interests of all the people — is a tested means of meeting problems, taking advantage of opportunities, and guiding change.

Planning involves the specification by the community of its goals and objectives, the inventorying of existing and expected resources, the development and adoption of plans, and their effective implementation. At each stage in this process, professional planners are available to assist: the Central New York Regional Planning and Development Board's staff, city and county planning staffs, and planning consultants.

Services

The MIDNY team, as professional educators, provides four complementary services: (1) locating, interpreting, and disseminating research and information about the region, its resources, and the planning process; (2) stimulating and conducting new research; (3) bringing together diverse groups and individuals whose interests may increasingly conflict as urbanization spreads; and (4) designing and carrying out educational activities, in cooperation with educational and governmental institutions and agencies, that will help the people of the region wisely plan and develop their total resources.

Such informal education can enhance planning activities and make a difference in the quality of development through active involvement of community leaders, increased awareness by the voting public, and expression by individuals and groups of needs, interests, and goals.

The Staff

The MIDNY staff includes two regional specialists, located in Syracuse who have primary responsibility for the Project's educational programs, and two extension associates, located on the Cornell University campus who have primary responsibility for the essential research back-stopping.

For additional information, contact:

Cooperative Extension — **MIDNY Project**
813 Syracuse — Kemper Building
224 Harrison Street
Syracuse, New York, 13202 Telephone: 315-422-0241

APPENDIX B: Sample Letter and Questionnaire (Planners Collaborative, Inc.)

Dear Sir:

One stated purpose of the Urban Planning Assistance Program is to establish a comprehensive plan which is consistent with local goals or objectives as they are perceived by members of the community. These objectives may be expressed in general terms, such as a healthier and more attractive environment for living and working; or more specifically, such as to strengthen local commercial areas, or to make the community more attractive to industry. The more specific the stated objectives are, the better they can be translated into specific policies in the plan.

In the course of the planning program, the consultants have formed ideas concerning future development. However, if a realistic plan is to be developed, these ideas must be tempered by, and brought into conformance with, locally felt objectives of the planning program and the comprehensive plan. A plan which does not take local aspirations into account - even if it is a good plan - is likely to receive limited acceptance and support.

Community objectives cannot and should not be determined or assumed by the planning consultant. As the planning program progresses, a basic function of the Village and Town Planning Boards and other local officials, as representatives of the community, is to apprise the consultant of future development needs and priorities as they are seen by the community. The consultant's role is to translate local aspirations into a feasible and acceptable plan.

Most of the basic studies have been submitted for review and discussion. The consultants feel, on the basis of past experience, that a questionnaire is a most useful vehicle to assess local impressions and judgment regarding community problems and future development. As local officials and public servants, you devote much time and effort to the problems of your communities. It is hoped that you will extend this diligence and consideration to the enclosed questionnaire.

Thank you.

Please return by mail or at the meeting on May 25

QUESTIONNAIRE

Although some of the following questions are more relevant to the Town and others to the Villages, please answer as many as you wish or have opinions on. If your opinion in a later question is contained in an earlier answer, skip the question or refer to the above answer. Feel free to attach additional sheets or write on the back of the paper if more space is required for your answers.

IN YOUR OPINION . . . . .

1. What problems in your community should receive early priority in the plan? What problems should receive later priority?

2. What do you think is the best approach to these problems?

3. Indicate any specific goals which you feel should be stated purposes of the plan.

4. What improvements do you feel are needed to make your community more attractive to industry or other sources of local employment?

5. What improvements would you recommend for the local transportation system?

6. Do you feel that municipally or authority operated parking areas and structures are necessary or desirable?

7. Would you recommend that existing commercial areas be strengthened, or new centers be designated to accommodate new population growth, or both? What reasons would you give in support of your recommendation?

8. Do you feel that existing public and private recreation spaces in the community are adequate or inadequate? What types of spaces and activities do you feel are needed?

9. What improvements do you think are needed as regards other community facilities such as libraries, schools, etc.? Please specify.

10. What improvements would you recommend for sewage disposal and water supply systems?

11. What changes would you recommend for your community's zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations. What reasons would you give in support of your recommendations?

12. Would you recommend that floodplain zoning regulations (restricting the use of land in floodable areas to non-intensive uses) be adopted and enforced?

13. Do you feel that subdivision regulations should require developers to reserve a certain percentage (such as 5 percent) of land to be developed for open space?

14. What items would you recommend to be given early priority in your community's capital budget?

15. Do you have any general or specific thoughts as to how existing open areas (particularly in the Town) should be developed? (For example, do you think new development areas should be designated in the northern parts of the Town, or close to existing developed areas? How do you think the plan should treat the area along Route 26, or the areas along streams?)

16. Do you feel that Urban Renewal is a necessary approach to some of the problems of your community? If so, what problems do you feel require renewal treatment and what areas would you recommend for renewal?

17. Do you think public housing, or rent supplemented housing is necessary or desirable?

18. How do you feel the community in general would react to proposals for urban renewal or public housing?

19. Do you feel that the goals which you have indicated or other suggestions which you have made could be better accomplished if the Town and the two Villages were a single unit of government? Why?

20. How do you think intergovernmental relations among the Town and the two Villages and with Broome County could be improved to make planning and other services more efficient and effective?

Although the consultants do not need to know the names of those who reply, we would appreciate it if you would check the appropriate spaces below:

Name of your community:	Town of Union	Endicott	Johnson City
Please check one:	____	____	____

	Elected Official	Appointed	Local Gov't employee	Other
Please check one:	____	____	____	____

ERIC Clearinghouse
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on Adult Education